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AUTHOR Weinberger, Helene; Didham, Cheryl K.
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ABSTRACT

Education majors at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Ohio are required to complete a credential portfolio prior to their final evaluation conference. At this conference the cooperating teacher, student teacher, and supervisor meet and discuss the completion of student teaching competencies. The portfolio contains evidence of completion of certian performance objectives. This portfolio is ungraded and is designed and compiled in any way the student wishes. Certain items must be included, but the finished product is for the student's benefit and is to be used as an interview device. Because BGSU is well known for this portfolio requirement and many school representatives visit the campus each year, a survey was conducted to obtain feedback from them on the value of the portfolio. Responses were highly favorable and the university was urged to continue its use. A list of the items required in the student teacher portfolio for elementary and secondary majors is included in this report. (JD)

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Helping Prospective Teachers Sell Themselves: The Portfolio as a Marketing Strategy

Helene Weinberger
Curriculum and Instruction
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

Cheryl Didham
Coordinator of Field Experiences
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio 43403

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Helping Prospective Teachers Sell Themselves:
The Portfolio as a Marketing Strategy

Bowling Green State University is located in Northwest Ohio about 20 miles south of Toledo. The relatively rural campus attracts students from all states but the majority of the student body comes from Ohio and close surrounding counties. The main campus has a population of approximately 15,000 undergraduates and the one branch campus located in Huron, Ohio, enrolls 1,200 students.

The College of Education and Allied Professions is now the third largest college on campus and graduates about 600 education majors each year. Approximately 550 student teachers complete their field experience in nearby rural, suburban, or urban school districts.

Bowling Green State University has enjoyed a reputation for graduating outstanding teachers and this is evidenced by a 97% employment rate. Seventy-four percent of these students find employment as private or public school teachers while the remainder either continue their studies or are employed in areas outside education.

This high employment rate can be attributed to many things, among them being the outstanding preparation of these students in their subject area and methods courses and also to the fine programs and workshops provided by the Student Services staff. All students have the opportunity to establish an employment file, use the services provided such as on-campus job interviews and attend the many sessions on interviewing, resume writing, and conducting a job search. Education majors, however, have another advantage. Every student must fulfill the requirement of completing a credential portfolio. This portfolio is ungraded and is designed and completed in any way the student wishes. Certain items must be included, but the finished product is for the student's benefit; to be used as an interview device.

Because BGSU is well known for this portfolio requirement and many school representatives visit the campus each year, a survey was conducted to obtain feedback on the value of the portfolio. In late September, 1986, 130 questionnaires were mailed to school districts that had participated in BGSU job fairs or interview sessions during the 1985-86 school year. Of the 130 questionnaires mailed, 72 or 55% were returned. These school districts ranged from local ones to some as far west as California, south to Florida, and east to Newton, Massachusettes.

The questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections:

1. How many education majors did you interview?
2. How many students showed you their portfolio?
3. How much time did you spend looking at the portfolio? What was the most useful section? What else would you suggest be included?
4. Would you recommend that BGSU continue the portfolio?

Sixty-seven (67) school districts completed the first question and indicated that they had interviewed from 1 to more than 60 students from BGSU that year.

Number of Students Interviewed	Number of Districts Responding
1 - 5 students	7
6 - 10 students	15
11 - 20 students	29
21 - 40 students	10
41 - 60 students	2
over 60 students	4

The main complaint expressed by interviewers was not that the portfolio was not useful, but that there was too little time during the interview to really look at it. Several respondents stated they felt badly when they could not spend more time on the portfolio and suggested using it at a second interview with the building principal.

Sixty-seven responses were recorded for question 4 with 56 or 83% stating that BGSU should continue the portfolio requirement.

Comments taken from the survey are listed below:

> BGSU students are very well prepared for interviews.
>
> We like to see applicants bring everything supportive of their efforts.
>
> All your candidates interviewed very well, it is a pleasure to be at BGSU. BG offers a well organized process and hospitalitity.
>
> We always find BG candidates thoroughly trained to interview. They make a favorable impression.
>
> I think the portfolio sets BG students apart from others. They appear organized and "together."
>
> The portfolio demonstrates a professionalism not apparent on many campuses. While I am sure the task of assembling is a tough one, the image and organization it demonstrates is a definite plus.
>
> The portfolio is a great tool for beginning teachers to fall back on.
>
> Of all the campuses I visit, I remember BG students by the quality and consistency of their portfolios.

A review of the literature from 1980 to 1986 revealed some background information on portfolios and their use. In three articles in Nursing Outlook (1984) the portfolio was used by the nursing profession as a way for student nurses to show documentation of prior learning. When a student nurse had completed her program of study at more than one academic institution it was important to document all the courses she had taken so that she could be placed in the appropriate level of study at the next institution. The focus of the portfolio on RN education is: 1) it shows evidence of skills and knowledge learned through study and experience, 2) the faculty uses it to place the student, and 3) it is useful in a student's program planning (Marsh & Lasky, 1984).

One of the most important items in a portfolio is the letter of recommendation. Because of grade inflation, transcripts are often relied upon only as a record of the courses that the students have completed. Many employers seem to give more value to the letters of recommendation. Therefore, according to Dr. Kasambira's article in Teacher Education, (1984) it is crucial that in a letter of recommendation the writer be honest, accurate, candid, direct and precise, use appropriate examples, be relevant, economical, and knowledgeable about the position for which the applicant is applying. We need to stop recommendation inflation because letters of recommendation have the potential of becoming one of the most important evaluative tools that an employer can use when hiring.

In the professions of law and medicine, people make decisions based on subjective information. The legality of subjectivity in recommendations was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in a case now known as Charlotte Horowitz vs. Board of Curators of the University of Missouri (Yodof, Kirp, Van Green, & Levin, 1982). In this case, Charlotte Horowitz, a fourth year medical student at the University of Missouri Medical School was dismissed from school as a result of subjective evaluations that had been accumulated from her instructors. Although Ms. Horowitz was academically competent, her attendance record, personal hygiene, and interpersonal skills left a lot to be desired, according to her evaluators (Olswang, 1983). This case indicates a legal approval for subjectivity for evaluating a candidate.

A credential portfolio for the student teacher is an individualized portrait of educational, professional, and relevant personal achievements. It should be noted that this is not a collection of everything in the life of a student, just the relevant professional material. The principles in a marketing strategy are: 1) knowing what you have to sell, and 2) advertising

it in an appealing way. The student teacher should know what he/she has to sell, use the verification of teaching competency skills and other related experiences with children, and advertise this knowledge and skills in a professional credential portfolio.

Education majors at Bowling Green State University are required to complete a credential portfolio prior to their final evaluation conference. At this conference the cooperating teacher, student teacher, and supervisor meet and discuss the completion of student teaching competencies. The portfolio contains evidence of completion of certain performance objectives.

The following is a list of the items required in the student teacher portfolio for elementary and secondary majors. The items with an * are required of everyone. The items with + are for elementary majors only. Other special items required for Art or Special Education majors will be noted after the item. Items not marked are optional. The table of contents, resume, and letters of recommendation are strongly advised to be included in the portfolio.

1. Table of Contents
2. Resume
3. State certification
* 4. Student teacher evaluation report and experience verification
5. Three letters of recommendation
* 6. Official transcript of grades
* 7. BGSU Placement Services credential form
8. National Teacher Exam (individual results)
9. Handwritten evaluation of student teaching experience
10. A summary of pupils' evaluation of student teacher's performance
* 11. Unit outline (student taught)
* 12. Four different detailed lesson plans (student taught)
* 13. One week of block plans (student taught)
* 14. Sociogram
* 15. Student teacher made test and test item analysis
\+ 16. Learning center
* 17. Pictures with labels
    a. Bulletin boards
    b. Student teacher and cooperating teacher
    c. School
    d. Pupils in large and small group interaction
    e. Field trips
    f. Special events

* 18. Audio tape of a brief lesson
19. Video tape of a lesson
20. Learning activity packet
21. Extra-curricular activities
22. Other honors or awards
23. Flander's interaction analysis or other professional instruments of behavior measurement
24. Any other experiences related to teaching skills
25. Case study of a pupil (optional Special Education)
26. 35 mm slides of Art majors art projects (Art)

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